



Enhancing Pastoralist Livelihoods through Livestock Cafés in the Karamoja Cluster

Community-based co-learning centers, Livestock Cafés, have the potential to promote land restoration and improve food and fodder security. Findings from a survey in Kenya and Uganda reveal that pastoralists are willing to contribute labour and some money to support the Cafés.

Background

Drylands cover 40% of the global land area and support over 38% of the world's population, as well as 50% of the global livestock population. Drylands are critical ecosystems that support millions of people, particularly pastoralists who rely on livestock for their livelihoods [1,2]. However, these regions are increasingly threatened by climate change, land degradation, and socio-economic challenges.

KEY MESSAGES

- Livestock Cafés are multi-functional hubs that address interconnected challenges of land degradation, food and fodder security and climate adaptation through locally co-developed solutions.
- Pastoralist communities show strong ownership and willingness to contribute - primarily through labour - indicating high potential for sustainability beyond external project support.
- Scaling up requires policy support, hybrid financing, and integration of these hubs into national pastoralist development and climate adaptation strategies.



In the Karamoja cluster (spanning northeastern Uganda, northwestern Kenya, southeastern South Sudan, and southwestern Ethiopia; Figure 1), pastoralists face additional pressures from population growth, economic inequality, and conflicts. Pastoralists are particularly vulnerable due to poverty, land degradation, and climate change.

Livestock Cafés (LCs) are innovative, community-driven hubs that demonstrate sustainable land restoration and livestock management practices. These centers, established under the Drylands Transform project, aim to improve food and fodder security through collective action.



Figure 1. Map showing the study area (with blue borders).

Methods

To assess the potential for community-driven sustainability, this study employed a contingent valuation (CV) experiment, a survey-based method used to estimate the value individuals place on non-market goods or services—in this case, the benefits of Livestock Cafés.

A split-sample design was applied to 866 households across four sites in Kenya and Uganda in 2022, with respondents randomly assigned to evaluate either monetary contributions (willingness-to-pay, WTP) or labour contributions (willingness-to-work, WTW).

Participants were first asked a question to determine whether they were willing to contribute anything at all, followed by a series of escalating bids (e.g., 1–13 hours of weekly labour or increasing amounts of local currency units) and asked to indicate their certainty of agreement using a five-point scale (“definitely yes” to “definitely no”). This multiple-bounded discrete choice approach captured nuanced preferences while accounting for uncertainty.

Data were analyzed using a statistical model, which estimated mean willingness to contribute and identified socio-economic drivers (e.g., income, education, livestock ownership) of participation. Additionally, the study calculated the opportunity cost of labour by comparing monetary and labour contributions, offering insights into the trade-offs households are willing to make. By grounding the analysis in real-world behaviour and local contexts,



the CV method provided a robust framework to gauge the feasibility of collective action in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions.

Findings

A. High willingness to contribute

Over 90 % of respondents in Kenya and Uganda expressed willingness to contribute to LCs, primarily through labour (e.g., 20 hours per month on average). Monetary contributions were lower, reflecting the limited financial resources of pastoralist households.

B. Preference for labour over monetary contribution

Labour contributions were preferred over monetary payments, especially in poorer communities. In-kind contributions were also considered, though less frequently.

C. Low opportunity cost of labour

The estimated opportunity cost of labour was low (0 (0.03-0.39 USD per hour), indicating that labour contributions are a feasible option for resource-constrained households.

D. Importance of collective action

Strong traditions of collective action, such as social networks, support the potential sustainability of LCs. Membership in social groups (e.g., savings groups) was widespread, with 94% of households participating in at least one group, and households with more social group membership were more willing to contribute.

E. Socio-economic determinants

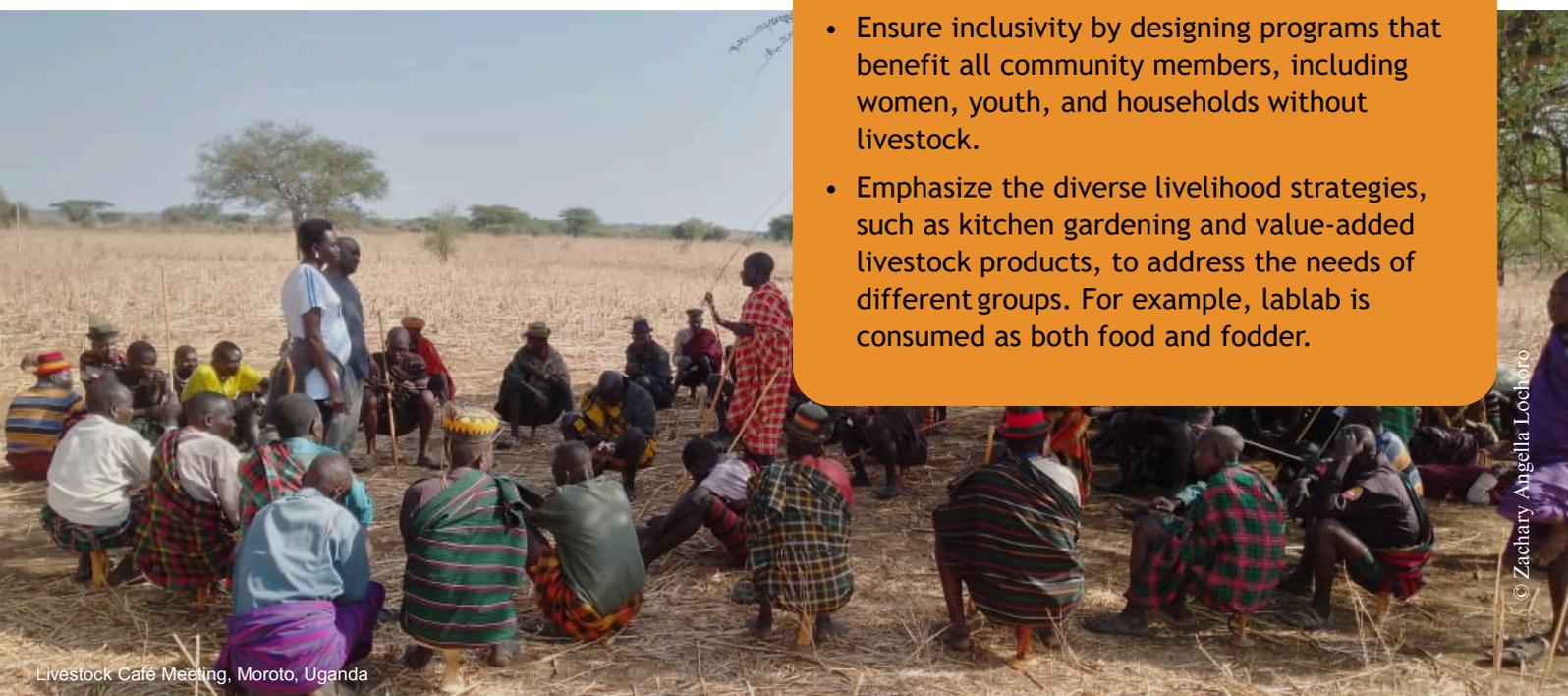
Male-headed households, larger households, and those with more livestock were more willing to contribute. Education and income levels also influenced willingness to contribute, with more educated households showing higher monetary contribution but less labour contribution.

Conclusion

Livestock Cafés offer a promising pathway to enhance food and fodder security, restore degraded land, and improve livelihoods in dryland areas such as the Karamoja cluster. By building on the willingness of pastoralist communities to contribute labour and building on existing traditions of collective action, LCs can be sustained beyond the initial project phase. Policymakers and development partners must prioritize inclusive, community-driven approaches to ensure the long-term success of these initiatives.

ACTION POINTS

- Given the preference for labour over monetary contributions, policymakers should design programs that prioritize labour inputs. This approach aligns with the resource constraints of pastoralist communities.
- Strengthen collective action by leveraging the existing social networks and traditional risk-pooling systems to enhance community participation in LCs.
- Ensure inclusivity by designing programs that benefit all community members, including women, youth, and households without livestock.
- Emphasize the diverse livelihood strategies, such as kitchen gardening and value-added livestock products, to address the needs of different groups. For example, lablab is consumed as both food and fodder.



Livestock Café Meeting, Moroto, Uganda

ACTION POINTS

- Build on local knowledge and leadership; use bottom-up approaches that respect local socio-cultural norms and leadership structures and engage communities in the co-development of LC activities to ensure relevance and ownership.
- Secure external funding for initial setup of LCs. While communities are willing to contribute labour, external funding from governments and development partners is critical for the initial establishment of LCs, especially investment in infrastructure, such as demonstration sites, water harvesting systems, and fodder banks.
- Strengthen extension services and capacity building beyond production to include nutrition, post-harvest handling, marketing, and entrepreneurship.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor the long-term sustainability and impact of LCs. Use evidence-based insights to scale up successful interventions and address challenges.

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Training for Trainer of Trainers in kitchen gardening, Chepareria, Kenya

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